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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 007070

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINS](#) [TU](#) [POLITICAL](#) [PARTIES](#)

SUBJECT: BAYKAL USES NATIONALISM TO CEMENT CONTROL OF  
LEADING OPPOSITION PARTY

REF: A. ANKARA 006878

[1](#)B. ANKARA 000501

[1](#)C. ANKARA 000581

[1](#)D. ANKARA 004042

(U) Classified by POLCOUNS Janice G. Weiner, , E.O. 12958,  
reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. Party Chairman and former Foreign Minister Deniz Baykal was re-elected chairman of the main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) on November 19, solidifying his dictatorial control over the party. The convention also showcased the continued evolution of CHP from a progressive, center-left party into an undemocratic, nationalistic, pro status-quo party with a penchant for anti-Americanism. End Summary.

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THE CHP CONVENTION: BACK TO THE FUTURE  
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[1](#)2. (C) On November 19, Deniz Baykal was reelected chairman of the Republican People's Party (CHP). He received all 1,158 of the valid votes, out of a total of 1,223 votes cast. Candidates for the party leadership needed 262 nominating signatures to become an official candidate at the convention and new CHP rules required everyone who wanted to nominate a candidate to personally walk to the front of the convention hall and sign their name to the nomination in front of everyone. It was well known that anyone who nominated a challenger to Baykal would later be purged from the party. As a result, Baykal was the only candidate on the ballot.

[1](#)3. (C) The atmosphere at the CHP convention was designed to remind the participants and television audiences of CHP's nationalistic and republican credentials. The CHP convention hall had pictures of Kemal Ataturk, the founder of both the Turkish Republic and the CHP, wearing the type of hat popular during the War of Independence that Turkey fought against European powers. Many youngsters were running around the convention hall wearing similar hats. A short film juxtaposed the War of Independence with Baykal's trips around the country. (Comment: The intent was to suggest that Turkey now faces a new war of independence against foreign powers trying to break-up the country and undermine the secular republic. End comment.) One of the banners hanging from the rafters proclaimed, "March First is Our Honor," a reference to 1 March 2003, when CHP MPs voted en masse against a resolution in the Turkish parliament that would have authorized U.S. troop deployment into Iraq through Turkey.

[1](#)4. (C) Baykal delivered a three hour speech at the Convention, repeatedly asserting that CHP is the defender of the secular and unitary Turkish Republic. He claimed that forces were attempting to break up the country and turn it into an "Islamic theocratic state". He accused PM Erdogan, the leader of the governing and pro-Islam Justice and Development Party (AKP), of being a member of the "Taliban." He also stressed the importance of holding early elections in 2006 so that Erdogan does not become president in 2007 (ref A).

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BAYKAL'S PARTY  
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[1](#)5. (C) Baykal and his inner circle exercise nearly complete control over CHP, despite widespread dissatisfaction with, and criticism of their leadership among the rank and file. POLOFFs have heard repeated criticism of Baykal and his inner circle from a variety of current and former CHP members, including dissident CHP MPs Hasan Aydin, Memet Tamanbay, Inal Batu, and Zenep Damla Gurel; former CHP MPs Erol Tuncer and Serafettin Elci; and former senior CHP leaders Erol Cevikce and Ertugrul Gunay. Baykal has systematically purged all opponents from positions of power within the party according to Batu, Cevikce, Tamanbay, and others. All the delegates who opposed Baykal at the January 2005 party convention have been punished by the party. All local and regional party leaders who backed Sisli mayor Sarigul for the party leadership earlier this year (refs B and C) have been replaced.

16. (C) Baykal and his cronies have used a variety of dirty tricks to retain control of CHP. A common tactic is to advertise that local party meetings will be held at a specific time, date, and location to elect deputies to regional or national conventions, and then hold the meetings with a small group of loyalists at a different time, date, and place -- and select pro-Baykal candidates. Baykal's dictatorial tactics have undermined CHP's popularity and caused many grassroots supporters to desert the party (ref D).

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INCREASING NATIONALISM AND ANTI-AMERICANISM  
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17. (C) Although CHP MPs continue to describe their party as a contemporary, European-style, social democratic party, CHP's leadership is increasingly using nationalistic, anti-Islamist, anti-EU, and anti-American rhetoric to defend the statist status-quo. CHP's leaders reject accusations that their party is anti-EU because CHP MPs have routinely supported EU reform legislation in parliament. At the same time, however, CHP's leaders have engaged in anti-EU rhetoric and contributed to conspiracy theories alleging that the EU's real goal is to break up Turkey. In conversations with POLOFFs, CHP MP Fuat Cay, CHP MP Sinan Yarikaya, and other senior party leaders close to Baykal

-- talk endlessly about their perceptions of corruption, mismanagement, and Islamic extremism within AKP;

-- rail against the EU and IMF;

-- criticize U.S. foreign policy, especially in Iraq and the lack of U.S. military action against the PKK; and

-- spin conspiracy theories about supposed repeated U.S. interventions in domestic Turkish politics, including allegations that the USG supported AKP's rise to power in Turkey.

18. (C) Comment. Although Baykal's strategy has garnered him complete control of the party, he has alienated many Turks who are ideologically inclined to support a secular, social democratic party. Baykal, moreover, has failed to attract nationalistic voters to the party, despite blatant attempts to pander to that portion of the population. CHP received 19 percent of the vote in the November 2002 election, but an October 2005 ANAR poll published in Turkiye newspaper on November 24 indicated that CHP's support had dropped to 14 percent. Whatever the specific poll numbers, there is wide agreement here that CHP's support has declined. The future of the Turkish left will remain dim, unless CHP, one of the other leftist parties, or a new left-of-center party is able to create internally democratic structures, develop policies that address the real concerns of average Turks, and build a grassroots party base. Despite CHP's weakness, its anti-EU and anti-American rhetoric will exert a negative domestic influence on Turkish, European, and American interests. End Comment.

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